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published in

British Journal of Religious Education
2003

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1080/0141620030250404](https://doi.org/10.1080/0141620030250404)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

de Ruyter, D. J., Conroy, J. C., Lappin, M., & McKinney, S. M. (2003). From heaven to earth. A comparison of ideals of ITE students. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 25(4), 271-286.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0141620030250404>

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Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



British Journal of Religious Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713616483>

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To cite this Article de Ruyter, Doret J. , Conroy, James C. , Lappin, Mary and McKinney, Stephen(2003) 'From Heaven to Earth: A Comparison of Ideals of ITE Students', British Journal of Religious Education, 25: 4, 292 — 307

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/0141620030250404

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0141620030250404>

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From Heaven to Earth: A Comparison of Ideals of ITE Students

Doret J de Ruyter, James C Conroy, Mary Lappin and Stephen McKinney

This article describes and discusses the outcomes of an open-ended questionnaire completed by Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students about their personal and professional ideals, that is, ideals they would like to pass on to their pupils, their ideal teacher and ideal school. We compared five groups of students that were formed on the basis of their personal ideals: a religious ideals group, a moral ideals group, a vocational ideals group, a materialistic ideals group and a remainder group. We found that those in the materialistic ideals group were more focused on their own ideal situations, like being married or being happy, than the others and that those in the vocational and moral ideals groups were less focused on these ideals. We also found that the moral and religious ideals groups had comparable personal and professional ideals, whereas the materialistic ideals group was clearly inconsistent. No clear picture emerged as to whether or not the vocational ideals group had distinctive professional ideals.

Introduction

The teaching profession and the education of teachers in the United Kingdom has undoubtedly changed and continues to change under the influence of successive educational policies into a profession dominated by competencies and success rates where there is little time and attention paid to ethical and philosophical questions (see Totterdell, 2000). The educational policy promulgated and underpinned by Third Way philosophies of the Labour government is explicit in its market driven agenda. A clear example can be found in the strategic plan of the Department for Education and Skills for England and Wales (DfES, 2001) in which the minister, Estelle Morris, writes:

There is now wide acceptance that to build an economy that will continue our success in the global market place we will need an even better educated and more highly skilled workforce. Equally importantly, to build a fair and inclusive society everyone must have the opportunity to realise their full potential (2001, 1).

While it may be argued that Morris is making socio-moral claims as well, these are regarded as second-order with a radical dependence on the economic. In the light of this it is not unreasonable to conclude that education is primarily conceived in instrumental terms: it is deemed important for economic growth and wealth rather than important in itself.

In order that the requirements of such an education be fulfilled it would be important to have a certain kind of teacher: one who, in the eyes of the government, is not only knowledgeable and skilful, but also able to transmit particular kinds of economic ideals to her pupils. Morris's views are fairly unexceptional; they embody some notion of a synergy between personal well-being or flourishing on the one hand and economic success on the other (see Winch 2002). This resonates with recent psychological research which has shown that people have a need to view themselves positively and regard being happy as a basic value (Heine *et al* 1999, 774). The self has become a new basis of value (Baumeister 1991, 89).

As something of a contrast, the Faculty of Education at Glasgow University, which has responsibility (in a number of its undergraduate programmes) for the education of teachers for Catholic schools, has an explicit expectation that teachers in Catholic schools should not only teach well but also embody particular sets of ethical and religious values, attitudes and dispositions. These values are rooted in the Catholic moral worldview which has, at its heart, the belief in both traditional ethical virtues such as charity and specifically religious/theological ones such as faith and hope (Scottish Office Education Department/Scottish Catholic Education Commission 1994; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2000; see also Sacred Congregation for Education 1988). Given these two different sets of ideals about education this study sets out to explore in what ways (if at all) our students construe them as significant in their professional and personal lives. Which ideals do they underwrite? Are their ideals contiguous with the Catholic ideals or do they mirror the professional ideals of the government and the self-focused ideals of society?

The research project

At the beginning of the academic year 2000–2001, we asked undergraduate ITE primary teacher students at Glasgow University to complete an open-ended questionnaire about their personal and professional ideals. The reason for this open format was twofold. Firstly, we had not discovered a sufficiently similar previous study within relevant scientific literature. Secondly, we had no clear sense as to the nature of the students' ideals and did not wish to prejudge these by providing parameters that were too tightly circumscribed. The questionnaire we used for our ITE students was the result of a draft questionnaire, which we had piloted in September 2000 with students undertaking a post-graduate certificate in education. On the basis of the trial we made two major changes in the questionnaire: we included a definition of 'ideals' and we added a question about the ideals, namely to rank them in order of importance.

The questionnaire comprised two parts. The first part invited them to articulate their personal ideals while the second, called 'professional ideals' was divided into three sections and focused on the ideals they would like to pass on to pupils, the

characteristics of their ideal teacher, and the characteristics of their ideal school. The students were asked to respond to very general questions, such as: 'What are your ideals?' or 'Which ideals would you like to pass on to your pupils?'. They were then required to list their ideals and rank them in order of importance. In respect of the ideals they had formulated for themselves and the pupils we also invited them to indicate whom they thought had influenced them and in the case of the professional ideals they were asked to provide a justificatory argument for the ideal. Thus, the students were asked to respond to different questions about their ideals and consequently had to reflect on their lists several times, which gave us more certainty about the reliability of our data.

In all 411 students completed a questionnaire during the first religious education lecture where one of the researchers was present to introduce the questionnaire and to ensure that the students completed it individually. Moreover, we believed that conducting the research in a formal session would reinforce the seriousness of the endeavour. While it is impossible to be entirely certain, there was no evidence to suggest that student participation was anything other than serious and focused.

The questionnaires were then subjected to an analysis by the research team. The development of the analysis scheme was grounded in our reflections on the kinds of ideals one can distinguish conceptually or theoretically and refined as a result of a hermeneutical interpretation of the responses of the students. We first made a distinction between ideals that specify desired-for situations or states to be in and ideals that specify desired-for personality traits or character traits.

The study unearthed both a diverse range of ideal situations in the students' responses and in some cases an articulation of ideal situations not only for themselves, but also for others, like their children or family and for everyone. This resulted in the categories in Table 1 (see opposite).

Our understanding of what constituted an *ideal character trait* was based on the Big Five theory or Five-Factor Model theory, which stipulates that there are five factors or categories of personality, namely extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness (Goldberg 1990; Walker 1999). Because the categories 'agreeableness' and 'conscientiousness' seemed to cover a diverse range of responses we further refined them. This resulted in the following ten categories of ideal character traits:

Extroversion	Think positive, more adventurous person
Social agreeableness	Be nice, good listener
Moral agreeableness	Be honest, be generous, to respect others
General conscientiousness	Always try my best, be disciplined
Social conscientiousness	To be a good friend

Table 1: Categories of ideals

	Self	Others	Everyone
Physical	Being healthy ¹	Good health for my family	
Safety	Being financially stable	My children always safe	Safety for children
Belonging	Being married		For no one to be alone
Esteem	Being successful	Celtic winning the league	
Self-actualisation	Achieving all goals		
Social	Having friends		
Moral	— ²		Peace on earth
Religious	Knowing God		
Educational	Finishing my course	My children achieving in school	Education for all
Professional	Getting a good job		
Specific professional		— ³	— ³
Materialistic	A silver BMW		
Hedonistic	Being happy	Happiness for my family	Everyone being happy

1 These are examples of ideals mentioned by the students.

2 We discovered that there was a great deal of overlap between moral ideals for oneself and the ideal moral character traits in terms of both content and mode of expression, and therefore decided to remove 'moral ideals for oneself'.

3 These ideals applied specifically to the profession of the teacher and were therefore not expected to be found for others or everyone.

Moral conscientiousness	To be a good person
Religious conscientiousness	To be a good Catholic
Professional conscientiousness	To be a good teacher
Emotional stability	To be confident
Openness	To be open-minded

We had to make some amendments to the analysis of the students' responses about the ideal school since, self-evidently, a school is not a person and therefore has no ideal personal character traits. However, we did find a large number of ideal characteristics of a school that could be interpreted as character traits of an institution and have therefore deployed five institutional character traits, that is, extroversion (fun, exciting, lively), agreeableness (warm, welcoming, friendly), conscientiousness (orderly, efficient), ethos (conscientious, moral) and openness (open to ideas).

The research team comprised five members. Each researcher analysed the ideals of two year groups and thus each year group was independently analysed by two researchers. The analyses of the two researchers were compared and cross-

checked, and in case of a different interpretation, the analyses were discussed. One member of the team had the responsibility of checking the final analysis to ensure consistency of interpretation in what was an extensive iterative process. Where there was some dispute about a particular categorisation further refinement and agreement took place in a team discussion. This ensured a uniform analysis of the questionnaires.

The biographical data collected in the questionnaire showed that the 411 students who had completed a questionnaire formed a fairly homogeneous group, 89.1% of the respondents being female and 84.4% under 25. Some 97.1% claimed to have a Catholic conviction and almost all students (98.6%) came from a family where at least one of the parents was Catholic. 92.7% attended a Catholic primary school and 89.1% a Catholic secondary school.

The analysis of the personal and professional ideals revealed a general trend in the ideals of our students (see De Ruyter *et al* 2002). The personal ideals of the students (2010 ideals mentioned by 391 students) mirrored the dominant societal ideals. The students primarily mentioned ideal situations they hoped to achieve for themselves, with hedonistic ideals, belonging ideals, educational ideals and social ideals being the most frequently mentioned. The outcomes with regard to their professional ideals, that is, the ideals for pupils (1506 ideals mentioned by 371 students), the ideal teacher (1840 ideals mentioned by 399 students) and ideal school (1594 ideals mentioned by 386 students) sharply contrasted with their personal ideals. Here ideal character traits, particularly agreeableness and conscientiousness were mentioned most often.

A central question for the team emerged as to whether or not the general trend applied to all the students or if there were particular sub-groupings where different trends were manifest. For instance, did the relatively small group of 35 students (8.5%) who mentioned a religious ideal as a personal ideal differ more generally in their personal ideals from the rest of the cohort? Or again, did they formulate different professional ideals? We decided to look more closely at those students who had mentioned personal religious, moral and socio-moral professional ideals. We wanted to investigate these groups in particular because we had initially thought to find these ideals figuring more prominently in the personal ideals of the whole cohort, most especially given the religious nature of the ITE course and our expectation that our students as future teachers within the Catholic sector would embody moral ideals with regard to their personal and professional lives. However, this is not what actually transpired. By way of a contrast we became equally, if not more interested in another group: those 83 students who had mentioned materialistic ideals for themselves. One of the things that made us interested was that we had found only one student who had mentioned materialistic ideals for the pupils, none had mentioned materialistic ideals for the teacher and only five had done so

for the school. We therefore wanted to discover what other ideals these students valued in comparison with the other students. One comment about this group needs to be made: though they mentioned materialistic ideals, they did not attach high value to these ideals (mean ranking is 3.58).

In the remainder of this article we will compare these groups. We will first describe the method of our investigation and outline our expectations for the four groups. In the third section we will present the outcomes of our comparison to see if we can find trends amongst these groups of students that make the outcomes understandable. These will be discussed in the final section. One comment about our methodology needs to be made before we proceed. The analysis that we present is based on one source of information only. The use of a single instrument to collect the data means that we are allowed to make only tentative and somewhat modest claims, because even though the questionnaire was extensive we cannot be completely certain that other instruments would not have given cause for amendments. Nonetheless, the size of the study was large enough to give reasonable substance to our conclusions and to continue analysing the group at a more specific level.

Method

Formation of the groups

We formed five discrete groups out of the total cohort. The first four embraced those who had mentioned a moral, religious, vocational or materialistic personal ideal, though not necessarily as their highest ranked ideal and the fifth group comprised the remainder who mentioned none of the above. Students were allocated to the moral ideals group if they had offered either a moral character trait (moral agreeableness, moral conscientiousness) or a moral ideal for others or for all. The vocational ideals group comprised those students who had articulated either a socio-moral professional ideal situation or the ideal of professional conscientiousness. The religious ideals group consisted of students who had mentioned a religious ideal situation or religious conscientiousness. The materialistic ideals group was based on materialistic situation ideals only. The remainder group then comprised those students who had not mentioned any of these ideals.

There was an unavoidable overlap between the groups, because students could of course have mentioned more than one of the ideals we were interested in, which was particularly evident in the case of the moral ideals and the religious ideals groups. In such cases we allocated the student on the basis of the ideal which she or he had ranked highest. For instance, if she had ranked her moral ideal with a 1 and her religious ideal with a 4, we allocated her to the moral ideals group. This was based on the assumption that the student, who had ranked her ideals herself,

attached more value to her moral ideal than her religious ideal. Thus we ended up with the breakdown laid out in Table 2.

Table 2: Student groups based on specific personal ideals	
Groups	N
Religious ideals group	27
Moral ideals group	90
Vocational ideals group	49
Materialistic ideals group	76
Remainder group	169

An objection to our allocation process might be that it is questionable whether or not the fact that a student had mentioned an ideal is sufficient to allocate her to one of the groups. Particularly if we compare these groups with regard to their other ideals, it might be thought that the basis is too weak. Our response to this would be that the fact that the students had mentioned these ideals is a sufficient basis, given the open-ended character of the questionnaire. Since no prior suggestions were made to the students it is reasonable to argue that what we were indeed dealing with were the sincerely held ideals of the students. Of course it might then be argued that the students' ranking was rather more arbitrary than we intended but, while this is always a possibility, it is not unreasonable to assume that the students took the ranking seriously and acted accordingly. Indeed, as already mentioned, because they had to rank these ideals themselves we can argue that they had to think about their ideals twice: not only which, but also in which order.

Expectations

Given that the groups were formed on the basis of their articulation of a personal ideal (that is religious, moral ...), we did not think it reasonable to formulate any expectations for the other personal ideals. However, we did expect to see some consistency within the groups as between their personal and their professional ideals. This expectation was based on the assumption that teaching is a personal profession where the self and the occupation may not easily be dissociated. Further, since the students had come from a Catholic school context and chosen to study in a university context which explicitly linked the personal and professional life, we reasonably expected this to be manifest in a certain congruity of the personal and the professional. The implication of this was that the religious ideals group was expected to mention religious ideals they wanted to pass on to pupils *and* religious ideals for the teacher and the school. We expected that the moral ideals group wanted to pass on moral ideals to the pupils *and* would mention ideal moral characteristics of the teacher and the school. Similarly, we expected the

vocational ideals group to harbour professional ideals for the teacher and the school and have educational ideals for the pupils. Finally, as already indicated, we knew that the materialistic ideals group did *not* have materialistic ideals for the pupils, the teacher and the school.

Analysis

We have used two statistical tests to detect significant differences between the groups. We used a Chi-square test to investigate whether or not there were significant differences in numbers of students for the categories of ideals. In order to be able to compare the groups, we recoded the data from ranking into binominal data (yes/no), because there were too many missing values. The extent of the missing values can be explained by the open-ended character of the questionnaire combined with the fact that the students had mentioned five ideals on average compared to 46 ideals categories (or 24 for the ideal school). When we found significant differences we investigated which group contributed to this by calculating the difference between expected count and actual count per group. Secondly, we applied a Kruskal-Wallis test to find significant differences in the five groups' ranking of the ideals. For this test we used the original, ranked data, which implied that for some categories the number of students per group was low. We will not include the statistical details of this test in the remainder of this section, because we did not find sufficient significant differences and must consequently surmise that any such differences could be attributed to chance.

In a number of cases students mentioned more than one ideal per category. However, for both tests we used the number of students, not the number of ideals they mentioned. Thus, if a student had mentioned two belonging ideals, we only use the first (and thereby highest ranked) ideal.

Results

Personal ideals

We were able to analyse 21 categories of ideals for the comparison between the groups. We obviously had to exclude the categories of ideals that had been the basis of the formation of the groups, because this would always lead to significant differences, and could only include the categories that were mentioned by more than four students. We found seven reliable significant differences between the groups. Table 3 (next page) provides the overview of the categories for which we found the significant differences and Table 4 (page 301) shows which groups have caused the significant differences.

Table 3: Significant differences in personal ideals between the five groups

Ideals	χ^2 value	Df	P ≤
Physical ideals	21.961	4	.000
Belonging ideals	25.092	4	.000
Hedonistic ideals	21.091	4	.000
Educational ideals	15.897	4	.003
General professional ideals	12.033	4	.017
General conscientiousness	12.350	4	.015
Social agreeableness	11.468	4	.022

Table 4 shows that the significant differences in the ideal situations had a similar pattern. In all cases, the significance was partly caused by the fact that the materialistic ideals group was larger than statistically expected. The vocational ideals group had a significantly smaller representation within physical, belonging and hedonistic ideals. The moral ideals group was significantly smaller for educational ideals and general professional ideals. We found two, though smaller, significant differences for the ideal character traits and, interestingly, they were both the opposite of the outcomes for the ideal situation categories, because in both cases the materialistic ideals group was significantly smaller than expected.

Thus, those in the materialistic ideals group seemed to be more focused on their own personal ideal situations than the other groups. Though this group did not place a high value on materialistic ideals, it nevertheless was the only group where students mentioned two or more materialistic ideals (which were not taken into consideration in the tests). In contrast with the moral ideals group, only one of the students from the materialistic ideals group mentioned a second moral ideal within one of the moral categories, whereas 21 students from the moral ideals group had two moral agreeableness ideals and ten mentioned two moral ideals for all (which again had not been used in the tests). When compared with the religious ideals group, none of the students from the materialistic ideals group mentioned a religious ideal and none of the religious ideals group a materialistic ideal.

A possible reason for the significant differences might be that the number of ideals mentioned as between the groups was significantly different – obviously, if the materialistic ideals group had mentioned significantly more ideals or the vocational group significantly less, this would have influenced the Chi square test, because the first group would have had more chance of having significantly more ideals within a category and the second group less. The students in the vocational ideals group had mentioned on average 3.85 ideals, the moral ideals, religious ideals and materialistic ideals group respectively 4.77, 5.00 and 5.14 ideals. The remainder group had the lowest average with 3.75 ideals per student. The average for all groups was 4.49

Table 4: Distribution of the groups

Ideals		Religious	Moral	Vocational	Materialistic	Remainder
Physical	Yes	9 ¹	20	4	34	49
		7.6 ²	25.4	13.8	21.5	47.7
	No	18	70	45	42	120
		19.4	64.6	35.2	54.5	121.3
Belonging	P			.0019 ³	.0015	
	Yes	10	28	7	43	59
		9.7	32.2	17.5	27.2	60.4
	No	17	62	42	33	110
17.3		57.8	31.5	48.8	108.6	
Hedonistic	P			.0017	.0002	
	Yes	8	34	13	47	83
		12.2	40.5	22.1	34.2	76.1
	No	19	56	36	29	86
14.8		49.5	26.9	41.8	92.9	
Educational	P			.0090	.0032	
	Yes	6	16	21	32	53
		8.4	28.0	15.3	23.7	52.6
	No	21	74	28	44	116
18.6		62.0	33.7	52.3	116.4	
General professional	P		.0063		.0399	
	Yes	4	16	14	30	47
		7.3	24.3	13.2	20.5	45.6
	No	23	74	35	46	122
19.7		65.7	35.8	55.5	123.4	
Conscientiousness	P		.0488		.0141	
	Yes	3	21	6	5	37
		4.7	15.8	8.6	13.3	29.6
	No	24	69	43	71	132
22.3		74.2	40.4	62.7	139.4	
Social agreeableness	P				.0122	
	Yes	6	19	9	4	20
		3.8	12.7	6.9	10.7	23.8
	No	21	71	40	72	149
23.2		77.3	42.1	65.3	145.2	
	P				.0409	

1 Actual or counted number of students having mentioned this ideal

2 Statistically expected count

3 The significant differences between the actual and expected count

and with a standard deviation of 0.6618 this implies that the remainder group had mentioned significantly fewer ideals ($> 1sd$). A Chi square test performed without the remainder group showed that the categories in Table 3 were still significantly different for the four groups.

Professional ideals

As indicated in the introduction, the professional ideals that the students had mentioned were primarily ideal character traits. We also found that there was much more consensus than was the case in relation to their personal ideals. We therefore did not expect to find many differences between the five groups. This proved to be the case; we did find significant differences, but only a few, which could just as easily be attributed to chance.

Within the ideals for pupils, we found three significant differences in numbers of students who had mentioned an ideal. These were for physical ideals (χ^2 value = 19.049; $df = 4$; $p = .001$), religious ideals (χ^2 value = 35.340; $df = 4$; $p = .000$) and moral agreeableness ideals (χ^2 value = 33.573; $df = 4$; $p = .000$). The physical ideals were mentioned by significantly more students from the materialistic ideals group ($p = .0012$) and by significantly fewer students from the moral ideals group ($p = .0369$). The number of the religious ideals group students who mentioned a religious ideal for pupils was clearly significantly higher ($p < .0001$) and from the remainder group significantly lower ($p = .0072$). (The expected count of the religious group was in one cell lower than 5). For the moral agreeableness ideals for pupils, the moral ideals group was clearly significantly larger ($p < .0001$), the religious ideals group significantly larger ($p = .0149$) and the remainder group was significantly smaller than expected statistically ($p = .0083$).

Within those ideals regarding the teacher we only found one reliable significant difference in the size of the five groups, for socio-moral professional ideals (χ^2 value = 11.069; $df = 4$; $p = .026$) were mentioned by a significantly higher number of students from the moral ideals group than statistically expected ($p = .008$). We also found significant differences for religious ideals (χ^2 value = 21.591; $df = 4$; $p = .000$) and religious conscientiousness (χ^2 value = 12.663; $df = 4$; $p = .013$), which were both mentioned by a significantly higher number of students from the religious ideals group. However, because only six students had mentioned the first ideal and five students the second, 50% of the cells had an expected count of less than 5 which made the significance not very reliable.

We found only two significant differences in the frequencies between the groups for their ideals regarding the school (8%). The differences were for religious ideals (χ^2 value = 28.030; $df = 4$; $p = .000$) and professional ideals for the managers of the school (χ^2 value = 10.060; $df = 4$; $p = .039$). The first of these can be explained by

the significantly higher number of students from the religious ideals group who mentioned this ideal ($p < .0001$). (The expected count of the religious group was in one cell lower than 5). Professional ideals for managers were mentioned by a significantly higher number of students from the moral ideals group ($p = .022$).

What do these results mean for the expectations we had formulated in favour of an assumed consistency between the groups' personal and professional ideals? We can argue that the moral ideals group is consistent in having moral ideals both personally and professionally even though we found only one significant difference for moral professional ideals. The consistency is, however, concealed, because there was a sharp increase in the number of students from the other groups who mention moral professional ideals.

The number of times that religious ideals were mentioned was much lower than we had expected on the basis of the Catholic identity of both the ITE course and the students, the lowest being eleven students who mentioned religious ideals with respect to the ideal teacher. However, it is interesting that given the low number of significant differences for the professional ideals, we found significant differences for religious ideals in ideals for pupils, teacher and the school, which were related in every case to the fact that the religious ideals group was significantly larger than statistically expected. We can therefore say that the religious ideals group as a group has been consistent, at least statistically, even though the number of students from the religious ideals group who had a professional religious ideal was under 50%.

We expected that the vocational ideals group would have more educational ideals for pupils and more professional ideals for teacher and school. However, only 65 students in total had educational ideals for pupils and there was no significant difference between the groups. We found two significant differences for the ideals we thought the vocational ideals group would mention more often, namely socio-moral professional ideals for the teacher and professional ideals of the managers of the school, but these could not be attributed to the vocational ideals group. We can interpret these results in four ways:

- 1 The vocational ideals group is not consistent in its ideals.
- 2 The group was not homogeneous. We tried to compare the 37 students who valued highly these ideals with the 12 students who had ranked these ideals as their third or lower ideal, but the test proved to be unreliable because the expected count in most cases was lower than 5 in 50% of the cells.
- 3 Their vocational ideals were less important than we at first expected.
- 4 The students are consistent, because the ideals they mention for the teacher are their conceptions of vocational and educational ideals.

The last interpretation seems to be the most plausible one, because we can assume that the character traits they value for the teacher are ideals they envisage for themselves in aspiring to become a good teacher.

The materialistic ideals group is probably the most interesting of the five. While having materialistic ideals for themselves none of them has mentioned a materialistic ideal for the pupils or the teacher. Additionally, the group did not differ significantly from the others with regard to the materialistic ideals of the school. This can be interpreted in two opposing ways:

- 1 They are so self-centred that they do not think about materialistic situations for others.
- 2 They are less materialistic than we thought on the basis of their personal ideals. We are inclined to follow the second interpretation given the low ranking of the materialistic ideals.

Discussion

This article has described the results of a comparison between five groups of students that were formed on the basis of their personal ideals. The purpose of such a comparison was to understand the results of the preliminary analysis of the questionnaires. At that first stage we had found a general trend whereby students tended to mention ideal situations they wished to achieve for themselves in the case of their personal ideals and ideal character traits for their professional ideals. This trend turned out to be similar for all students, but we found that members of the materialistic ideals group were more focused on their ideal personal situations than the others. We also found that the vocational ideals and moral ideals groups were less focused on their own ideal situations and finally that the religious group differed significantly in its professional religious ideals from the other groups, even though the number of students who mentioned religious ideals was substantially lower than we had expected. The fact that fewer students from the moral ideals group mentioned ideal situations might be thought to be in line with their seemingly more moral stance. It might be suggested that students who espouse moral ideals are inclined to focus less on their personal ideal situation and consequently may be generally more altruistic in outlook. This might have also been expected from the religious ideals group. However, while this group was smaller than statistically expected for educational, professional and hedonistic ideals the differences were not significant. Thus, unlike the moral ideals group, they appear to be little different from the others.

Of course it is important to be tentative in drawing conclusions from such a study given that it is impossible to control how students respond in such an open-ended milieu and that the interpretative hermeneutic has necessarily a certain embedded

subjectivity. Nevertheless, and given these limitations, we may say that the ideals of our students are more in line with the dominant societal ideals and the view of the government as laid out at the opening of this article than the ideals of the institution in which they are undertaking their education and the context within which they intend to discharge their personal and professional obligations. This seeming lack of influence of professional teacher educators within a putatively value-laden context might lead to three kinds of questions. The first relates to the impact of current practices in teacher education within a religious setting, the second to the confusions and contradictions in the institutional discourse about education and the third to the implications for the future.

With respect to our current practices, it might be argued that no visible substantial impact can be detected in the students' religious ideals, despite the considerable effort made to assist students in articulating the comprehensive nature of religious schooling. While we need to be circumspect in reaching such a significant conclusion, the absence of any substantial difference of response as between students in their first and students in their fourth year would at the least lend weight to such a conclusion. (We have not included a breakdown of the ideals by year, but the analysis showed that there were no significant differences in religious ideals for the four year groups.) Our anxiety about the paucity of religious ideals is also mirrored with respect to the similarly diminutive impact of the professional character of our course. The fact that less than 20% of the students have educational ideals for the pupils is somewhat disquieting and may reflect a growing trend in educational discourse to favour self-esteem over intellectual engagement. Against the background of this discourse there is a second set of questions.

While the conversations about a religious worldview take a significant place in the education of our students it is not a universal one nor, indeed, arguably at least the most significant. The general discourse in the Faculty is more likely to mirror that which is widely found in educational and political circles and consequently to carry greater force with students than a religious one. The growing research literature on student attitudes to religion in religiously denominating high schools clearly illustrates the issue. Most recently, Flynn and Mok's (2001) work points to the relationship between the low esteem with which final year school students hold religious claims and religious education and their perception of the esteem in which it is held by both their teachers outside the religious domain and by the institution as a whole. There is no need to assume that the perceptions of student teachers are likely to be radically different from those of senior high school students. Students see through the ostensible claims of value to the actual value with which particular practices and perceptions are held by individuals, groups and institutions. Consequently, while they may be strongly aware that the claims to a distinctive religious anthropology are alive within their programmes in religious education, they are equally aware that the major emphasis institutionally lies elsewhere.

The third issue emerges from these two and it may be that we require to articulate more fully throughout the students' programme a more coherent and focused set of educational, moral and religious ideals. We might consider consistently placing before them a more robust set of obligations related to these dimensions of teaching than is currently the case. This might involve a programmatic weaving together of the person and the profession that has been lost as a consequence of the increasing compartmentalisation of persons. As Bottery opines, it is 'increasingly subjected to the twin demands of rationalisation and commodification ... [which] occurs through the attempt to turn education into a product, its "consumers" adopting market attitudes, its producers being judged by their performance in this market' (2000, 158). The rich and value laden conception of the educational enterprise which we, like Bottery, wish to recuperate requires us to instil a sense of calling in our student teachers which transcends contemporary notions of professional distance. As a Faculty with responsibility for preparing students for Catholic schools, we should take this to be a particularly pressing imperative.

For Catholic schooling in particular and religious schooling more generally the implications of these findings may be more wide-reaching than questions about personal faith or individual and group ideals. Religious schools depend on teachers who can embody a coherent set of principles which reflect the philosophical, theological and consequent anthropological and educational claims of the institution. These teachers in turn need to have a highly refined set of ideals where the personal and the professional are to some extent at least co-terminous (see SOED/SCEC 1994). Indeed, a further question may be tentatively raised in the light of this. If the religious education curriculum (long seen as a key distinguishing mark of Catholic education) is dependent upon the person of the teacher and their catechetical intent, and if aspiring teachers appear to harbour ideals which at best might be said to be unsupportive of the claimed for personal ethico-religious impulses at the core of Catholic catechesis, then the question of efficacy must somewhere rise to the surface.

If then, as this research tentatively suggests, the next generation of teachers for Catholic schools appears to embody ideals more in tune with an educational philosophy characterised by positional goods and economic materialism then it must necessarily provide a significant challenge to the effective continuation of Catholic schooling. Of course it may be as Arthur points out that the influence of Catholic higher education is 'somewhat negligible considering [that] extensive government regulation has also been combined with college affiliations and federations' (1995) and that in the face of a dominant government rhetoric little can be done to ameliorate the dominance of a particular view of education which privileges the economic (materialist) over the ethico-religious. But this then is only the beginning of and not the end of our deliberations since it only touches on the possible contradictions at the heart of teacher education for religious schooling which is determined by the very different priorities of government in late capitalist democracies.

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